



Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

— *Making a positive difference through education and service* —

September 18, 2002

TO: School Administrators

I am pleased to update you on several important curriculum and assessment initiatives underway at the Department.

I) "Curriculum Sampler"

We are creating a comprehensive document, currently referred to as the "Curriculum Sampler," that includes examples of quality curriculum from a variety of Missouri districts, along with supplementary information about developing and implementing effective curricula. Since late winter, Department staff members and curriculum specialists from across the state have been reviewing mathematics, communication arts, science, social studies, health/physical education, fine arts, and vocational curricula for possible inclusion in the Sampler. We are not able to include a complete example of a given district's curriculum because of space limitations, but we will present small sets of learner objectives with instructional strategies and assessment methods. Each set of examples will be consistent with MSIP curriculum standards. We will disseminate the Sampler in late fall, and we plan to distribute periodic updates as resources permit.

We hope that the Sampler provides staff in your district with useful examples they can follow as they develop/refine curriculum. There are many good curriculum guides in Missouri, and we are delighted to showcase excerpts from them.

II) Grade-Level Content Expectations

In accordance with the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and in response to requests for more specificity in MAP domains, we are developing grade-level content expectations (or, in MSIP terms, measurable learner objectives) for mathematics, communication arts, science, and social studies. Here are the major principles guiding our work within each content area.

1. Expectations need to be specific as well as measurable, amenable to setting standards for mastery, and capable of alignment to related teaching activities and assessment strategies.

2. We will vertically align expectations, placing an objective at the grade level where it should have the primary focus. As we move up the grade span, concepts/ideas and objectives will build on one another, with increasing complexity, depth, and sophistication.
3. We will write expectations for each level in the elementary and middle-school grades; however, we may write a combined set of expectations for grades 9-12. (The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 regulations call for expectations only at grades 3-8, so we have some flexibility at the primary and the high-school grades. However, we know that some educators would find high-school expectations useful, so we will make every effort to provide as much specificity as possible.)
4. We want to array expectations according to “major concepts” or “big ideas,” taking advantage of natural connections within a discipline and avoiding undue emphasis of minute details and factoids.
5. The groups writing and reviewing the expectations must be representative of our state’s diverse nature because we want the final products to reflect a variety of perspectives.
6. We will use a number of pertinent documents to inform our work, including national content standards/projects, curriculum frameworks from other states, and curriculum guides from Missouri districts.

We are convening small but representative writing groups for each subject during September and October, and we will bring larger groups together in the late fall to critique the initial drafts. The writing groups will re-convene in December and January to make revisions and refinements. In February and March, we will disseminate the revised drafts via the Web, the Superintendents' Mailbag, and the Show-Me Curriculum Administrators Association regional and state meetings. During this comment period, we will also present these drafts to representatives of our state’s teacher and administrator organizations. In April and May, we will prepare the final versions of the expectations, taking into account the feedback we receive during the comment period.

We are accepting a limited number of nominations for the review groups. If you or someone from your district would like to serve as a reviewer, please contact Donna Cash at 573/751-2625 or dcash@mail.dese.state.mo.us. Be sure to tell Donna the subject area you prefer.

We will continue to update you about our progress on this important effort. We are certain that once the expectations are in final form, they will prove to be a valuable tool to the Department as well as to members of your staff.

III) Assessment Requirements of No Child Left Behind and MAP

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 provides an opportunity to make several changes in the Missouri Assessment Program (MAP). By the spring of 2006, we must administer annual assessments in communication arts and mathematics in grades 3-8 and at one level at the high-school grades. Thus, we must add communication-arts tests at grades 4, 5, 6, and 8 and mathematics tests at grades 3, 5, 6, and 7. We intend to begin work on these new tests as soon as possible.

The new federal legislation also requires states to annually assess science at the elementary grades, the middle-school grades, and the high-school grades by the spring of 2008. However, our current science assessments meet these requirements.

For more information about the MAP and No Child Left Behind, including our time line for meeting the law's requirements, go to
<http://www.dese.state.mo.us/divimprove/assess/index.html>.

IV) National Assessment of Educational Progress

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 places major emphasis on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and ties participation in the NAEP state-level assessments to Title I status. We are forming a state advisory group to help us promote participation in the NAEP testing, and we hope that you will give NAEP your full support if students in your district are selected for inclusion in one of the samples.

Please contact me or any Curriculum or Assessment staff member (573/751-3545 or 573/751-2625) if you have questions or comments about any of these initiatives. We welcome your input, and we appreciate your enthusiasm and support for effective curriculum and assessment.

Sincerely,

Sharon Ford Schattgen

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